

February 5th, 2020

**SB208 - Public Safety – Rifles and Shotguns – Secondary Transactions -
SUPPORT**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

William Smith, Chair

Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice-Chair

Chair Smith and members of the committee,

My name is Robert Van Rens. I am veteran and a gun owner. In 2010 I became an NRA handgun, rifle and shotgun safety instructor, then resigned my membership and my certifications in 2013 in protest at the way the NRA responded to the mass shooting at Sandy Hook. Until my health interfered, I was an avid hunter. I grew up in a part of the country where guns and hunting were ubiquitous, and I have been around them since I was a child. I was taught and continue to teach responsible and safe use of firearms.

Firearms are weapons, uniquely dangerous tools, designed to kill or injure, and all other applications are secondary uses.

As a safety instructor, it was my job to ensure that my students understood the importance of safe gun-handling skills. I encouraged them to practice regularly and to always keep in mind that any firearm was ultimately a weapon and could be deadly. Before transferring possession of any gun, it is reasonable that the transferee undergo a cursory background examination – after all, this is already mandated for all transfers of any firearm by licensed dealers and prior to any handgun transfer in Maryland, for both dealer and non-dealer transfers.

We already balance our constitutionally mandated freedoms to bear arms with a responsible system of background checks for specific types of firearm sales and transfers. As a society we acknowledge the need to bar possession of firearms from those convicted of felonies, those who have committed domestic abuse and other crimes of violence, and persons suffering from dangerous mental illness. Yet it is currently possible for anyone at all to readily acquire non-regulated firearms from a private party with no check whatsoever.

I urge you to adopt this simple reform to close a dangerous gap on Maryland's firearm regulations. It will not impede legal, legitimate transfers, but it will prevent someone who should not have access to guns from coming into possession of one.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Robert Van Rens

